

SERRA CAFEMA

22.9576° S, 18.4904° E

PRICE: FROM US\$660 PER NIGHT

A well-dressed eco-retreat,  
and oasis for the adventurous

# Splendid isolation

WORDS: NICOLE TRILIVAS    IMAGES: WILDERNESS SAFARIS



Tiptoeing above the rushing Kunene River that slashes a border between northern Namibia and Angola, Wilderness Safari's Serra Cafema camp in the Marienfluss Conservancy is just about as remote as it gets. The recently revamped hideaway can be reached via Wilderness Safaris' airstrip set some two hours away by 4x4 through the kind of mind-bending desert landscape that looks right out of the Paleolithic Era. As far as neighbours are concerned, there are none to speak of – lest you count the silvery oryx, Namibia's national animal; dazzles of desert-adapted mountain zebras; and the nomadic Himba tribespeople.

Since reopening in 2018, this chic camp operates on 100 per cent solar power and has an extremely light eco-footprint. Superfluous mod cons like WiFi, television, and air conditioning are swapped for connections with the beyond-friendly, almost entirely local staff and indoor-outdoor living spaces that make the best of the fresh river breezes and send the camp's handsome slate-grey mosquito nets aswirl.

The eight-key riverside camp is connected via elevated decks that form tree house-like paths. Seven near-identical 'tents' are palatial in size, unanimously boasting soaring thatched-roof ceilings; outdoor living areas; and colossal photographic portraits of the Himba that hint at the tribe's ancient mystique and spirit. There is one family tent, which is larger than the others with two rooms and two bathrooms. Indoor-outdoor showers cast clouds of scented steam care of local Mbiri toiletries made with Marula oil, Kalahari melon seed, and heady Namibian myrrh hand-harvested by the Himba. Complimentary laundry service is offered daily, and there are a handful of spa services available.

Meals are served al fresco on a gently curving deck under a feathery green canopy of winter thorn trees. Local game and fish often make an appearance on the plates, though there are plenty of options, and the menu changes daily. There's no better place to stargaze than on the deck's over-plumped couches in the cool blue-green glow of the beguiling plunge pool.

## THINGS TO DO

### Quad biking

Chase down the sunset over dusty, red-gold dunes on modern quad bikes designed to handle the rough, ancient terrain and otherworldly landscape forged of basalt, sand, volcanic rock, and granite.

### Cultural excursions

Wilderness Safaris leases their land for the camp from the Marienfluss Conservancy, chiefly owned by the Himba people. Spend a morning learning the customs of the people, who are also employed as guides at the camp. One of Africa's most fascinating tribes, they speak Otjihimba, a click language that requires the removal of the four bottom teeth for proper pronunciation.

### Boating

Go for a nature-packed boat ride down the river where you may spy Nile crocodiles that can grow up to six meters in length, along with a variety of dazzling birds like the Goliath heron painted with a shock of coral pink along the underside of its wings. Wilderness Safaris guides can also arrange sundowners on the Angolan side of the river.



Stripped-back rooms offer ambience, rather than mod cons



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